

Volume 1

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MSCoE

MESSENGER

The Official Newsletter of the VA MS Center of Excellence West



A Message from our Directors

Welcome to the first issue of the MS Center of Excellence West Newsletter. We hope that you may already be familiar with the MS Center of Excellence West (MSCoE) which started in January 2003. MS specialists from the Puget Sound and Portland VA are partnering together to provide services and expertise to veterans with MS and their healthcare providers. Our intent is to improve the clinical care of veterans with MS by establishing a network of experts to provide a system of high quality and consistent health services. We appreciate this opportunity to reach out and bring people together for a common purpose - addressing the special needs of veterans with multiple sclerosis that reside west of the Mississippi River.

Our other objectives are to conduct and disseminate research relevant to the health needs of veterans with MS and pilot clinical trials at VAPSHCS and PVAMC about

MS. Additionally, we provide national programs of education for VHA healthcare providers, veterans, and caregivers. We also train new providers through a VA Special Fellowship program. Lastly, we utilize state-of-the-art informatics and telemedicine technology to develop a registry and enhance the clinical services, research and educational components of the center. Our goal with this quarterly MSCoE Newsletter is to provide you with current and future activities of the center, as well as to provide you with information that will assist you in caring for veterans with MS. Your participation in the MSCoE Network is important and valued, and we look forward to working with you on this journey of improving the healthcare of veterans with MS.

Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH
Director

Dennis Bourdette, MD
Co-Director
Associate Director for
Research & Development

Ruth Whitham, MD
Associate Director for
Clinical Care

James Bowen, MD
Assistant Director for
Clinical Care and Research
& Development

Michael Hatzakis, Jr., MD
Associate Director for
Communications,
Informatics & Outcomes

Marsha Tarver, PhD
Associate Director for
Education & Training

Kelly Goudreau, DSN
Assistant Director for
Education & Training

Aaron Turner, PhD
Education & Training

Lynne Walker, CRRN, CNA
Education & Training

Drew Blazey, MBA
Administrative Officer

Jennifer Jett, BS
Administrative Officer



Upcoming Events

- ✓ MSCoE West Portland staff will travel to Roseburg, Oregon VAMC to present information about the MSCoE to the Roseburg staff.
- ✓ MSCoE West Portland staff will have a videoteleconference with White City, Oregon VAMC to present information about the MSCoE.
- ✓ 2nd MS Audio Case Conference: Cognitive, Emotional and Psychosocial Issues in MS: Presented by Dennis Bourdette, MD and Jesus Lovera, MD, MSPH
February 3, 2005 - 12:00noon - 1:00pm PST
- ✓ MSCoE Satellite Broadcast: Fatigue and Cognitive Effects of MS - Presented by Lauren Krupp, MD & Cinda Hugos, MS, PT - April 28, 2005 - 8:00am - 10:00am PST

First Audio MS Case Conference sponsored by MSCoE West

On December 9, 2004, the MSCoE West held their First Audio MS Case Conference at the Portland VA Medical Center in Portland, Oregon. The case

conference was titled Treatment Decisions in Secondary Progressive MS and was presented by Dr. Ruth Whitham, Associate Director for Clinical Care for the MS

Center of Excellence West, and Dr. Laura Schaben, an MS Fellow at the the Portland VA Medical Center. Physicians participated through a VANTS audio line, and included MS specialists from VISN's 12-23, as well as MS Center of Excellence staff members from both the Portland VAMC and Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle.



FDA Approves Tysabri® (natalizumab, formerly known as Antegren) for Relapsing Forms of MS

The FDA has approved the release of a new treatment for relapsing MS. The treatment is natalizumab (Tysabri® formerly known as Antegren®). “The advantages of natalizumab are the convenience of dosing (once a month), remarkably few side effects, and impressive decreases in attacks and MRI

activity,” says James Bowen, MD, Co-Associate Director for Clinical Care of the VHAMS Center of Excellence West. “The positive effect of this new medication after one year of treatment is very encouraging,” adds Chris Bever, MD, Director of the MS Center of Excellence East. “We hope that further study will show that the benefits are

sustained with long term treatment.” Biogen Idec and Elan Corporation produce natalizumab and they recently announced the results

of two international studies that showed the efficacy of natalizumab.

One of these studies, referred to as the AFFIRM trial, compared the natalizumab against placebo. This study showed that natalizumab reduced relapses of MS by 66% compared to placebo after one year of treatment and also dramatically reduced new MS lesions within the brain detected by MRI. “However,”

says Dr. Bowen “it is important to realize that the drug is not expected to improve existing (old) lesions on the MRI.” The other study, referred to as the SENTINEL study, compared interferon-beta 1a (Avonex®) given with natalizumab to interferon-beta 1a

given with placebo. This study also showed a dramatic decrease in relapses after one year of therapy in people receiving natalizumab. Natalizumab represents a new class of drug for the treatment of MS. Natalizumab is a humanized monoclonal antibody and is the first selective adhesion molecule (SAM) inhibitor drug to be released by the FDA. Natalizumab binds to white blood cells and prevents them from entering into the brain and spinal cord. This drug is given by monthly infusion in a doctor’s office or hospital based clinic. The drug is generally well tolerated. At this point, over 2,800 patients have received natalizumab in clinical trials. “The data from the two trials of natalizumab are very exciting. A 66% reduction in relapses after one year of treatment is a

much better result than was obtained in the trials of the currently available disease modifying drugs, which include the interferons (Avonex®, Betaseron® and Rebif®) and glatiramer acetate (Copaxone®).” said Dr. Dennis Bourdette Co-Director of the MS Center of Excellence-West. “Natalizumab will certainly give us a new treatment option for people with relapsing MS. For more information see:

*“The positive effect
of this new
medication after one
year of treatment is
very encouraging.”*

<http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Research-Tysabri.asp>
<http://www.biogenidec.com/>



Need to
contact us?



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The Paralyzed Veterans of America

The Paralyzed Veterans of America, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1946, has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of their members—veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction. PVA's Research and Education Program also undertakes activities in areas of special interest to their members and all individuals with spinal cord dysfunction. For further information about the PVA, please visit: <http://www.pva.org/>



MY HEALTHVET Update

My HealthVet is the VHA Health Portal created for veterans and their families, and for VA employees. This new health portal will enable you to access health information, tools and services anywhere in the world you can access the Internet.

Today's healthcare is really a strategic partnership between patients and providers, and this is especially true in the case of managing MS. My HealthVet is a powerful tool to help you better understand and manage your health. It is a powerful tool for sharing information with your family, with your caregivers, or with anyone you choose. My HealthVet puts you at the center of your VA care. Register now to have full access to all features at <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>.



Major Events in 2004....

Rehabilitation Professional Training Workshop: Comprehensive Care for People with MS - March 5, 2004.

Sponsored by MSCoE West, along with Oregon Health & Science University and Paralyzed Veterans of America. Videotapes of this workshop are available for reservation.

Cognitive and Neurobehavioral Issues In Multiple Sclerosis -

April 19, 2004. A 4-hour videoconference symposium which was sponsored jointly by the VA Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence – East and West.



MSCoE West Advisory Committee Meeting - July 2004. Above: MSCoE Staff at the Advisory Committee Meeting in July 2004. From left to right: Drew Blazey, Julie Saunders, ANP, Jesus Lovera, MD, Michael Hatzakis, Jr., MD, Ruth Whittham, MD, and Jennifer Jett, BS

MSCoE West Regional Meeting –
September 18, 2004
Held in Portland, Oregon. Attended by
VA representatives from VISN's 12-23.

John Whitaker Distinguished Lecture – “Genes and MS: Tracking Down the Elusive Prey”

presented by Stephen Hauser, M.D. - September 17, 2004 in Portland, Oregon. The John Whitaker Lecture was established by the Department of Veterans Affairs to honor John Whitaker, M.D. Dr. Whitaker was a preeminent neurologist who made seminal contributions to the understanding of MS. He was chairman of the Department of Neurology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and had a long history of research funding through the Department of Veterans Affairs.



Stephen Hauser, MD



Elaine Whitaker, PhD



Dennis Bourdette, MD

Multiple Sclerosis & Parkinson's Disease in the 21st Century - September 17, 2004. Held in Portland, Oregon as part of the John Whitaker Memorial Lecture titled "Genes & MS: Tracking Down the Elusive Prey" which was presented by Stephen Hauser, M.D. Sponsored by VA MSCoE-West, Oregon Health & Sciences University and the Northwest PADRECC.



From left to right: John Booss, MD, Christopher Bever, Jr. MD, Elaine Whitaker, PhD, Stephen Hauser, MD, Dennis Bourdette, MD and Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH.

**Visit us
online at:**

www.va.gov/ms

On December 3, 2003, Dennis Bourdette, MD, Co-Director for the MS Center of Excellence West, presented “*Cognitive Impairment & Mood Disorders in Multiple Sclerosis*” for the Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) noon VTEL program. This presentation targeted physicians, psychologists, nurses, social workers, recreation therapists, addiction therapists, pharmacists, residents, interns, and others interested in mental health care.

If you are interested in viewing a videotape of this presentation, please email Jennifer Jett at Jennifer.Jett@med.va.gov.



Dennis Bourdette, M.D.

Winter 2005

PRESENTATIONS AVAILABLE ON VHS

A number of presentations given by the MS Center of Excellence staff are available for reservation. If you are interested in viewing any of the titles listed below, please contact Jennifer Jett at Jennifer.Jett@med.va.gov.

Rehabilitation Professional Training Workshop: Comprehensive Care for People with MS - March 5, 2004

- ✦ Fatigue: Take Control – presented by Lois Copperman, PhD, OTR - 1 hour, 6 minutes
- ✦ Exercise Programs for MS – presented by Cinda Hugos, MS, PT - 37 minutes
- ✦ Key to Efficient OT/PT Evaluations – presented by Lois Copperman, PhD, OTR & Cinda Hugos, MS, PT - 1 hour
- ✦ Pathophysiology, Diagnosis and Treatment of MS – presented by Dennis Bourdette, MD – 1 hour
- ✦ Les Burger Presentation – 35 minutes
- ✦ Cognitive Problems in MS – presented by Lois Copperman, PhD, OTR – 37 minutes
- ✦ Diagnosis & Treatment of Spasticity in MS – presented by Jodie Haselkorn, MD – 57 minutes
- ✦ Gait and Mobility in MS – presented by Cinda Hugos, MS, PT – 57 minutes
- ✦ Ordering Equipment in the VA System – presented by Nathaneal Stewart – 25 minutes

MS & Parkinson's Disease in the 21st Century - September 17, 2004

- ✦ Charcot, MS & Parkinson's Disease: A Historical Perspective – presented by Dennis Bourdette, MD
- ✦ Genetic Insights into Parkinson's Disease – presented by Cyrus Zabetian, MD
- ✦ Anxiety Busters: Update on the Treatment of Anxiety for the Neurologist – presented by James Hancey, MD
- ✦ Neuroprotection & Parkinson's Disease – presented by John Nutt, MD
- ✦ Neuroprotection & MS: The Future of Treatment of Progressive Disease – presented by Dennis Bourdette, MD

- ✦ New Avenues in the Treatment of MS: The Coming of Age of Monoclonal Antibodies – presented by John Rose, MD
- ✦ John Whitaker Memorial Lecture: Genes & MS: Tracking Down the Elusive Prey – presented by Stephen Hauser, MD
- ✦ Rehabilitation Medicine, MS & Parkinson's Disease: Tips for the Neurologist – presented by Jodie Haselkorn, MD, MPH

OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS



Laura Schaben, M.D. joined the MSCoE West team in Portland, Oregon as an MS Special Fellow in July 2004. Dr. Schaben attended the University of Nebraska Medical College, where she received her MD in 2000, and then worked as a Neurology Resident at the St. Louis University Hospital from 2000-2004 before obtaining the Special Fellowship position in MS at the Portland VAMC.

Dr. Schaben is also a part-time Instructor of Neurology at OHSU.

Marsha Tarver, PhD joined the MSCoE West Seattle team in September 2004. Marsha replaces Rhonda Williams, PhD as the Educational Director for the MSCoE West. Marsha attended the University of Southern California, where she received her PhD in Educational Psychology. Prior to joining the MSCoE West staff, Marsha worked for California State University in Fresno as an Associate Professor in the College of Social Science.

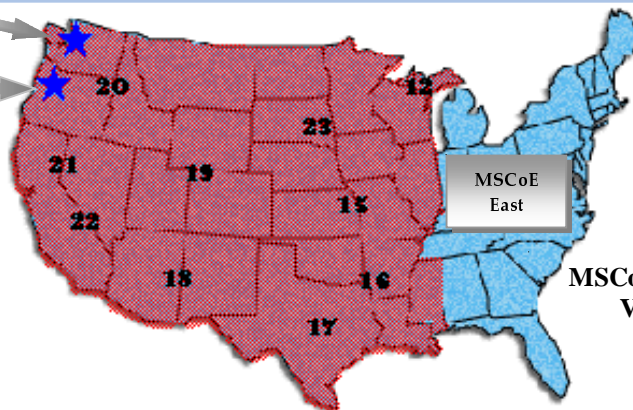
MSCoE West Creates a National Council of VHA MS Clinic Directors

One of the main goals of the MS Center of Excellence West has been to create a National Council of VHA MS Clinic Directors to improve the quality of MS services throughout VHA and to foster development of integrated hub and spoke care systems for MS in other VISN's.

In September 2003, the MSCoE West held the first Regional Meeting in Portland, Oregon, where MS professionals from each of VISN's 12-23 attended, along with representatives from VA Central Office, MSCoE East, and United Spinal. During this meeting, topics of discussion included Research, Education, Developing an MS Registry, Telemedicine, Clinical Issues, the MSCoE website and CPRS Templates. Since this initial meeting, the MSCoE West has held two additional Regional Meetings ~ one at CMSC in June 2004 and the other in Portland, Oregon in September 2004.

MSCoE West - Seattle

MSCoE West - Portland



MSCoE West includes
VISN's 12-23